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CONTENTS

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: The leadership is voicing concern over the performance of local leaders. (Page 1)

URUGUAY: The Tupamaros have placed the government in an uncomfortable position. (Page 2)

SYRIA: People's council (Page 3)

PHILIPPINES: Student riots (Page 3)

GUYANA: Canadian bauxite company (Page 4)

COMMUNIST CHINA: Soldier-minister (Page 4)

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA: The leadership is voicing increasing concern over the spotty performance of local party, government, and economic organizations.

A recent editorial in the party's main daily, Rude Pravo, for example, publicly castigated local party and management organs for their organizational weakness and failure to instill incentive among the workers. Rude Pravo's reference to "old habits" and the reluctance to take on "new tasks" on the part of local leaders is indicative of the administrative lethargy among the ranks that has plagued the economy. In an unusually frank discussion of the country's economic problems, party leader Gustav Husak on Tuesday condemned such "endemic" problems as waste, pilferage, and malingering among the workers.

The poor performance of Czechoslovakia's local institutions is a direct result of the large number of relocations and purges of local party and economic administrators during the past year. The net effect has been to demoralize remaining local officials, who complain about confusion and lack of worker cooperation.

Czechoslovak leaders are fully aware of the fact that administrative efficiency on the local level will be the ultimate test of the regime's policies, and they are worried about the political implications of continued economic faltering. The official media, for instance, have paid considerable attention to the recent events in Poland, describing the "proper" methods of the Polish regime in dealing with its economic problems. It seems reasonable to conclude that the increased attention being given to local government and economic administrators in Czechoslovakia is born in part of the workers' riots in Poland. As such, it may be preparatory to taking remedial measures at the next party congress in May.

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URUGUAY: The Tupamaros' public declaration that the Brazilian consul will be released when emergency security measures end was a clever gimmick that has contributed to a setback for the government.

A terrorist communique indicated that the family of Consul Gomide has paid the demanded ransom--the Tupamaros asked for \$1,000,000 but probably received only about one fourth of that amount--and tied his release to the scheduled expiration of emergency measures on Saturday. The government has strenuously avoided any appearance of meeting terrorist demands, however, and on 16 February requested a 45-day extension of the security decree.

[On Wednesday, the permanent legislative committee, reflecting the sentiment of a congress jealous of its own prerogatives, turned down the President's appeal. The government's campaign against the Tupamaros had suffered a mild reversal earlier in the week as well; the Supreme Court ruled that the administration's plan to try terrorists in military rather than civilian courts was unconstitutional.]

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NOTES

SYRIA: Prime Minister Asad has appointed a 173-member "people's council," a move promised when he seized power in a bloodless coup last November. Although the council is expected to act as a rubber stamp for Asad's policies, its formation illustrates his desire to broaden his regime's political base. There have been some reports that Asad is also planning to hold a referendum in which he would be elected president--a move that probably would exacerbate political and religious frictions within the country because Asad belongs to the Alawite sect, a minority Muslim group. Asad's recent activities have indicated that he believes himself firmly in control, however, and he may well be considering such a move, possibly in conjunction with a new constitution.

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PHILIPPINES: The situation in Davao, on Mindanao Island, remains unsettled following the student riots there on 16 February; considerable property damage resulted, including the ransacking of the USIS library. Police and army reinforcements are being moved in from a neighboring province. The demonstrations, the most violent to date in a provincial city, apparently were instigated by a leftist student group in Manila. The disturbances reflect a growing momentum in student agitation which could result in widespread violence during country-wide protests planned for 23-26 February.

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GUYANA: Nationalization of a Canadian-owned bauxite company appears imminent since the company is not prepared to meet Prime Minister Burnham's demands for a controlling interest. Burnham reportedly obtained approval from all except one of his cabinet members on Tuesday to nationalize the Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA), a subsidiary of the Aluminum Company of Canada, after fruitless negotiations. Legislation for the nationalization of DEMBA presumably will be presented by 23 February to parliament, where Burnham should have little trouble securing the necessary two-thirds majority approval of the measure.

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COMMUNIST CHINA: Peking's latest ministerial appointment is a further indication of the influx of inexperienced and relatively junior army officers into the central government apparatus. The newest soldier-minister to be identified is Yang Chieh, an obscure Armored Corps officer who has been awarded the Ministry of Communications portfolio. Of the four new ministers named over the past few months, three are military men. Their appointments, together with the presence of a number of army men in subministerial positions, suggests that no civil ministry will be entirely free of military influence. Staffing the post - Cultural Revolution government apparatus remains one of the most controversial issues in Peking, however, and the slow pace of personnel selection probably has been due in part to continued resistance by some elements in the leadership to the army's expanding role.

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